

Task Force C Meeting Summary

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

Task Force Participants: Elaine Brown (chair) – Michigan Food and Farming Systems, Melinda Curtis – Select MI Detroit, Kathy Fedder – MI Department of Agriculture, Ben Kudwa – Michigan Potato Industry Commission, Christine Lietzau – MI Department of Agriculture.

Additional Participants: David DeVries – Eastern Market Advancement Coalition, Kimberly Hill – Eastern Market Advancement Coalition, Joseph Kuspa – Eastern Market Advancement Coalition, Viki Lorraine – MSU Extension and C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Agriculture, Susan Smalley – MSU Extension and C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Agriculture.

The sixth Task Force C: Promoting Michigan Foods meeting convened Tuesday, April 18, 2006 from 12:00-2:00pm, Constitution Hall in Lansing. Council Member Elaine Brown chaired the meeting.

Ms. Brown called the meeting to order and introduced David DeVries, Kimberly Hill and Joseph Kuspa from the Eastern Market Advancement Coalition (EMAC), a nonprofit organization with the mission to promote the economic vitality and advance the public purpose of the Eastern Market District. Mr. Kuspa discussed the current organization and management of Eastern Market and many opportunities that EMAC and others see for Eastern Market's future.

Mr. Kuspa gave a brief history of the market and current operations. There has been an operating farmers' market at the current location since 1891. The Eastern Market District is now a mix of wholesalers, food processors, retail stores, and direct market retail from farmers and vendors. Approximately 65% – 75% of purchases are wholesale as opposed to retail, but Eastern Market has managed to balance the retail/wholesale dynamic over the years where other markets have struggled. Primarily though, farmers are at the heart of Eastern Market and are key to maintaining its "farm fresh identity" and unique character.

Mr. Kuspa discussed the following for opportunities EMAC has identified for Eastern Market that the state could have a role in supporting:

- Wireless Technology Initiative so farmers and vendors can accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards for food stamp recipients can purchase fresh food at the market.
- Establishment and Enforcement of Quality Standards.
- WIC food package changes.
- Promotion of Farmers' Markets and Nutrition.

Task Force participants discussed what the state's role could be in supporting farmers' markets in general and Eastern Market in particular given its unique opportunities as the state's oldest and largest farmers' market. The following recommendation was developed:

Recommendation C4: Provide support for developing and improving farmers' markets in Michigan.

- a) The MI Department of Agriculture should pilot a Farmers' Market Support Program with Detroit's Eastern Market given its unique assets and tremendous potential as the state's oldest and largest farmers' market.

MFPC staff will further develop Rec. C4 and send it to the Task Force for feedback and further input.

Task Force participants then reviewed Recommendation C3 "Farm to School" that was developed in the March meeting. Discussion focused on fleshing out the "small purchase threshold" implementation strategy. Ultimately, more needs to be learned about how the small purchase threshold actually works before finalizing the recommendation. MFPC staff will continue working on this with Marla Moss and will circulate a revised version of Rec. C3 for Task Force feedback and approval.

The next Task Force C meeting will be held in June, date and time to be determined.